

Town Meeting Coordinating Committee

Meeting of Monday, June 6, 2011

Town Hall, Diana Romer Room

Attendance: Nonny Burack, Peggy Roberts, Rob Crowner, Adrienne Terrizzi, Mary Streeter, Aaron Hayden (Select Board liaison); absent: Harry Brooks, Carol Gray, Pat Holland.

1. Call to order: Peggy calls the meeting to order at 3:05pm.

2. Welcome: No action.

3. Old business: Bus tour: Adrienne reports that she returned the batteries for the portable microphone when it proved nonfunctional on the bus tour. Mary proposes using TMCC funds to purchase a microphone system; Adrienne suggests requesting a bus that has a built-in speaker system.

Virtual bus tour: Efforts to compile a photo/text/narrative summary of the warrant fell short due to its time- and labor-intensive nature. The committee agrees to reconsider whether to make another attempt for a future Town Meeting when the full committee is present.

Town Meeting preparation: The committee discusses the ongoing conversation about the scope of Town Meeting's decision-making authority and the tensions between information gathering, deliberation, and time. It is agreed that TMCC must continue to help disseminate information, but that Town Meeting members must also be responsible for absorbing as much as possible. Nonny suggests a forum on the foundations and mechanics of zoning.

Middle School auditorium: Adrienne reports that she brought the committee's concerns about heat and light to Ron Bohonowicz, who has been reducing wattage as he replaces bulbs, making the room cooler and saving energy; however, he cannot authorize the use of CFLs at this time because they cannot be dimmed during stage productions. Lights can't be turned off for Town Meeting because members need to be able to read at their seats. He controls the air temperature remotely through a computer connection, but it takes time to make adjustments and the equipment used is designed to balance inside and outside conditions.

Evaluation forms: Mary reports that the number rating system used on the evaluation forms this year was confusing to use and did not yield useful information. The committee agrees to revise the form.

New member orientation: Aaron suggests providing new members with information about all of the committees doing work on issues that come before Town Meeting, and how to engage with those committees. The committee agrees to reconsider how to present new member orientation, including whether it should be conducted separately from the warrant review or precinct meetings.

4. Election of officers: No action.

5. Town Meeting suggestions and concerns: TMCC election: It is observed that no mention of the imminent closing of polls was made on the night of the TMCC election, possibly dampening turnout, though that was also a very intense night of deliberation. The committee will discuss with the Town Clerk whether voting booths can be moved to the same side of the auditorium as check-in.

Tally cards: There was only one tally vote in eight full sessions of Town Meeting this year, reinforcing the committee's interest in overhauling the production and distribution of tally cards. A single set of tally cards for the entire meeting may impact some members' diligence in checking in, though the need to attain quorum will provide some incentive. The committee will discuss these issues with the Town Clerk.

Handicapped parking: Nonny reports that her attempts to get additional reserved parking floundered amid confusion among the police and school departments over authority for responding to this request. The committee will ask Harry to look into the matter, as he has done previously.

Recognition of speakers: The committee discusses how to make the passing of the microphone faster and more efficient, including using one microphone in each of the four aisles. A Town Meeting member has proposed offering logoed sponsorship of new microphones to local businesses. Mary suggests that a written policy for recognizing non-TM speakers (particularly when a large number have indicated a desire to speak) be developed. The committee will discuss this issue with the Moderator.

Photography at Town Meeting: Several non-TM people were conspicuously photographing during some sessions this year, including a *Daily Hampshire Gazette* photographer, a local blogger, and someone shooting in support of an academic paper. There was concern that these may have been distracting or intimidating to speakers. The committee discusses whether flash photography should be restricted, and whether photographers should be restricted to certain areas of the auditorium to prevent them from interfering with proceedings. The committee agrees to discuss this with the Moderator.

Participation in budget prioritization: Aaron suggests that the committee develop a master timeline of the meeting schedules of those committees involved in crafting the budget, for distribution to Town Meeting members before the process begins in October, which the committee agrees is a good idea.

Child care: Aaron reports that he heard from some prospective Town Meeting candidates who did not run because they were unaware of the child care subsidy. The committee agrees to consider how to publicize this provision in advance of the next election.

Article presentations: Mary reports that she is attempting to archive all of the slides that were projected on the screen at Town Meeting as a way of preserving a complete record. Information about submitting slides to TMCC could be added to the document that explains how to make a presentation at the warrant review and Town Meeting.

6. Posting meetings: No action.

7. Summer projects: The committee discusses previous steps taken to create a record of the duties performed by members of the committee including specific steps taken, task checklists, and contacts made (e.g., how to organize a bus tour) and agrees that this project should be completed this summer. Additionally, specific liaisons to outside entities such as ACTV should be identified so that there are consistent points of contact. There needs to be a way to pass on institutional information so that another member can step in seamlessly when necessary.

The committee will consider developing a policy for vending outside of Town Meeting, clarifying whether it is the responsibility of the school department, the Moderator, or TMCC itself.

The committee will consider and respond to the suggestions about the conduct of Town Meeting offered by the chair of the Select Board in a recent email.

8. Fall Town Meeting: No action.

9. New business: Town Meeting postmortem: Mary states that the outcome of the discussion and vote on the pool revealed to Town Meeting members their ability to affect the budget, which seems like a positive development.

Mary suggests asking the Town Manager to project at the beginning of Town Meeting whether the current fiscal year will finish with a surplus or deficit so that members will have a sense of how successful the budget approved in the previous year was.

Mary proposes surveying Town Meeting members about how they prepare for Town Meeting as a way of gathering feedback about the efforts of TMCC. Nonny suggests including a questionnaire with the budget calendar discussed earlier.

10. Minutes of previous meetings: Adrienne moves (Nonny seconds) and the committee votes 5-0 to approve the minutes of April 25, 2011 and May 16, 2011 without amendment.

11. Future meetings: The next meeting will be held either Monday, June 13 at 3:00 or Wednesday, June 15 at 2:30. Peggy will confirm as soon as possible.

12. Adjournment: The meeting is adjourned at 4:56pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Rob Crowner

Documents provided:

1. agenda
2. draft minutes of 4/25 and 5/16 meetings